

COINS

For 1982 proof sets, the 'For sale' sign goes up early

By Roger Boye

Uncle Sam began accepting orders for 1982 proof sets last Monday, two months earlier than most collectors had expected.

And although the price is still \$11 a set—unchanged from 1981—many hobbyists had wanted a reduction because this year's sets won't contain a Susan B. Anthony dollar. The Bureau of the Mint suspended production of the little-used coin several weeks ago.

In place of the Anthony dollar, the new set will sport a proof medal featuring the treasury seal and an eagle. The medal will have no monetary value, however, and experts predict it will be a dud on the coin market.

To order a 1982 proof set containing five coins [cent through half-dollar] and the medal, send a check or money order to Bureau of the Mint, 55 Mint St., San Francisco, Calif. 94175. The limit is five sets per customer or per address, and the mint promises that sets will be mailed by next Dec. 31.

Government bureaucrats say they will accept orders for about two months, but will announce an earlier cutoff date if they receive an unusually large number of orders. Last year, Uncle Sam sold about 4 million proof sets in a 48-day ordering period that started April 1.

Proof coins are made with specially prepared slugs and dies to create a

mirrorlike finish free of blemishes. Collectors consider them the apex of the minting art.

● A Massachusetts man may be the first collector in the country to report finding copper-coated zinc pennies in circulation.

After paying for groceries on Jan. 14 at a West Roxbury store, the man said he got two or three 1982-dated cents in change. He then asked the clerk if she had more, and ended up with 27 of the coins, according to a report in *Numismatic News*, a hobby newspaper.

The man cut one of the cents with a saw to look at its bright zinc core. Thanks to a microscopic-thin copper coating, the new zinc cents appear identical to the nearly all-copper cents, but they weigh about 20 percent less.

● The shortage of pennies was severe enough in New York last year that a large city bank offered to pay \$1.20 for every 100 Lincoln cents turned in by customers.

And although a few banks in some other parts of the country have made similar offers, none of several Chicago-area banks contacted in mid-January said they paid a premium for the coins.

"We've had people call from as far away as Iowa and Wisconsin asking what we pay for pennies," said Ray Teachout, supervisor of the cash control department at the LaSalle National Bank. "We're glad to take the coins, but we give face value only."